

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE  
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FLOOR DEBATE

February 14, 2005 LB 126, 129

by Class I districts and the results show little correspondence between the needs of the student and the budgeted amounts per student. In K-12 districts, by contrast, all taxpayers and all property in the district contribute to the support of all students. Does this guarantee a more equitable result? No, but at least a single school board...

SENATOR CUDABACK: Senator Raikes, we're now on your time. We're now on your time, Senator Raikes.

SENATOR RAIKES: Oh. Thank you. No, but at least a single school board has the authority and responsibility to consider the operational and building needs of all students. This K-12 structure, particularly with the accountability provisions proposed in LB 129, allows us the best opportunity to move forward, and move forward we must. The argument is presented that you, quote, can't force consolidation of Class I schools because it will somehow destroy rural Nebraska. The only entities being consolidated in LB 126 are school boards. Service on a school board is a nonpaying job, except in the case of Saunders County District 44. How does it destroy rural development to eliminate nonpaying jobs? Well, you say that's just the start of it. The K-12 board will now be in charge, and the argument apparently goes, they are either a squadron of idiots or a bunch of hate-filled outsiders; they will close the school without listening to anyone and all that is dear and sacred will be gone in a flash. Is the essence of this argument that you can't trust local citizens serving on a K-12 board to properly govern a school district? If it is, the burden is on you. We have had outstanding results with K-12 school boards in rural as well as in other areas of the state. All this bill does is untie their hands. It gives them the authority they need to decide how to best serve parents, students, and taxpayers. The K-12 board and only the K-12 board has authority to close a building. But what about our Class I school and the survival of our town? Keep in mind that if a Class I site has an average of 2.5 students per grade, and is the only school within an incorporated village, the building is protected. In other words, if it's a viable school, it is protected in the bill, as it is now written. Many Class I buildings, though, are outside city or village limits. Perhaps a bigger issue here is